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Administrative Research in a Neo-institutionalist Perspective: Finland, Calling for Globalization, and the Rehabilitation of Public Administration

Pertti Ahonen¹

Abstract

Applying a neo-institutionalist perspective, the article analyzes administrative research in Finland. The results pinpoint contradictory official micro-institutional regulation influencing the research albeit moderated by flexible implementation, and recent institutional weakening in the status of the research field. Institutional trade-offs obtain between the limited global scholarly contribution of Finland's administrative research and the domestic legitimation it has enjoyed so far. The characteristic radical institutional changes have comprised measures for the academic upgrading of teaching and research disciplines. Besides invigorating the global contribution of Finland's administrative research, the results suggest the rehabilitation of Public Administration as an academic field in the country.

Keywords

micro-institutionalization, agency, legitimation, radical change, public administration research, higher education

Paasi (2005) and Meriläinen, Tienari, Thomas, and Davis (2008) pinpoint a global bifurcation of research into pursuits by scholars from pre-eminent countries and those from marginal countries. Within administrative research scholars from such countries as the United States, the Netherlands and Norway define the directions and norms (Ferlie, Lynn & Pollitt, 2005; Peters & Pierre, 2007a;

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Kickert, 2008). Acknowledging this, the article adapts and applies an approach to a topic which is not confined to the target country of Finland by far, namely the institutionalization of research. This puts conceptual demands on the reader, but it offers the advantages of theoretical anchorage, themes to elaborate upon, and a body of empirical research to utilize. The article applies neo-institutionalism, which has been amply acknowledged also within administrative research in its rational choice, historical, sociological, constructivist, discursive and other variants (Peters & Pierre, 2007b). This complicated state of affairs calls for the explication of the particular sub-species of institutionalism to which the article subscribes.

The deliverables of the article should be comparable with previous empirical and critical country studies on the topic (e.g., Kickert, 2008; Noordegraaf, Brandsen, & Huitema, 2006). The article pursues a sub-species of neo-institutionalism which has been rare among Finland's scholars but amply pursued by their colleagues of the other Nordic countries of Sweden (Brunsson, 2009; Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008), Denmark (Scheuer & Scheuer, 2008) and Norway (Christensen, Lægreid, Roness, & Røvik, 2007). Propitious historical contingencies (Boxenbaum & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2009; Schoonhoven & Dobbin, 2010) connect the neo-institutionalist sub-species with a global body research. Although within it, administrative research and the related higher education have not been studied, several of its themes support the analysis to accomplish. These include the development of research fields (Schofer, 2003) and fields of higher education (Frank, Schofer, & Torres, 1994; Frank, Robinson, & Olesen, 2011), the evolution of curricular contents (Meyer, Bromley, & Ramirez, 2010), the claims of professions for a scientific basis of their status (Fourcade, 2006), the transnational standardization of higher education (Hedmo, Sahlin-Andersson, Wedlin, 2006), and the global institutional transformation of universities (Kruecken & Meier, 2006).

The Approach and the Research Questions

Micro-foundations

This article applies a sub-species of neo-institutionalism that arises from explicit micro-foundations. To elaborate these, Powell and Colyvas (2008) outline an impressive genealogy, which grows from early roots with such authors as Mead, Mills, Goffman, Garfinkel, the later Wittgenstein for the analysis of “performatives” or “acts-in-language”, and, last but not least, Berger and Luckmann (1991, p. 72) as they write: “Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors”. The neo-institutionalist sub-species follows Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Zucker (1977) while analyzing the role language in mediating institutionalization, such as in procedures of naming (Guenther, 2009), in categorization, classification and boundary-drawing (Negro, Koçak, & Hsu, 2010; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010; Rasmussen, 2011), and in the forging of identities (Glynn, 2008). The sub-species of neo-institutionalism also advises to make “use of ‘breaches’, deviant events, or conflicts that reveal... undiscussed boundaries of taken-for-granted understanding” (Schneiberg & Clemens, 2006, p. 214). The first research question can be stated as:

Research Question 1: What are the micro-foundations of administrative research in Finland?

Agency

“Agency” comprises the general social research problem about the constitution of action by the actors, the conditions of their action, and both in combination (e.g., Giddens, 1984; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Wang, 2008). In analyzing “agency”, Meyer (2008, p. 702) characterizes what he calls “actorhood”, which is constituted on institutional models and scripts about what it entails to be an actor and to act in the first place. Meyer and Jepperson (2000) derive the foremost modern and late modern “agency” from “standardized technologies of agentic authority” available for the

institutionalization of agency, and “littered around the landscape” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 345) for anybody to exploit.

Meyer and Jepperson (2000, p. 108) analytically take apart three types of agency, “agency for itself,” “agency for others,” and “agency for cultural standards.” Among these, the expansion of the first one has been amply studied in such contexts as those of gender, human rights, organizations and nations. Foci of studies on the “agency for others” include enhanced or new types of professions and specialized expert organizations (Meyer, Boli, & Ramirez, 1997; Meyer & Jepperson, 2000; Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000; Meyer, 2008; Drori, Meyer, & Hwang, 2009; Brunsson, 2009). A third type, the “agency for cultural standards”, may expand by other means, but frequently it advances by “scientization”—science improving performance, supporting legitimation, or doing both in various combinations (Meyer, 2002; Drori & Meyer, 2006). Notably, the “scientization” not only covers positivist, rationalist and empiricist “science”, but also pursuits on interpretive, critical and other less conventional presuppositions. The second research question becomes:

Research Question 2: What “agency for itself”, “agency for others” and “agency for cultural standards” does Finland’s administrative research bear, whether of a “scientized” or other variety?

Processes and Outcomes of Institutionalization

A resilient neo-institutionalist theme comprises institutional models and institutional procedural scripts, their diffusion from afar and their contagion from anear (Strang & Soule, 1998; Meyer & Jepperson, 2000; Dobbin, Simmons, & Garrett, 2007), and their adaptation for their various actual uses (Strang & Macy, 2001). The models and scripts outline horizontal and vertical institutional structures (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, Tolbert & Zucker, 1983), institutional rules and routines

(March, Schultz, & Zhou, 2000), and institutional aspects of language (Loewenstein, Ocasio, & Jones, 2012). Numerous empirical studies have analyzed the influences of institutional elements upon performance, upon the reduction of uncertainty while the elements strengthen institutional legitimation, and upon performance and legitimation together (Strang & Meyer, 1993; Lee & Strang, 2006; Drori, Meyer, & Hwang, 2009; Brunsson, 2009; Schmitt, 2011).

Neo-institutionalism also keenly studies “loose coupling” between performance and legitimation; institutional elements, besides or instead of delivering performance, may evolve as legitimating “rationalized myths” that protect the sensitive, performance-generating institutional core (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). On the contrary, excessively “tight coupling” between performance and legitimation may damage the core elements (Sauder & Espeland, 2009). Empirical studies indeed pinpoint loose coupling frequently to prevail between institutional performance and legitimation (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983; Meyer, Boli, Thomas, & Ramirez, 1997; Meyer, 2002; Drori & Meyer, 2006). The third research question can be spelled out as:

Research Question 3: What trade-offs obtain between the performance of administrative research in Finland and its legitimation, and are the trade-offs mediated by “loose coupling” between the performance and the legitimation aspects?

Radical Institutional Change

The neo-institutionalist study of radical change has been influenced by different established orientations of research. These include the analysis of social movements carried out by such authors as Olson, Zald, and Tilly (Opp, 2009; Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Su, 2010; Strang & Soule, 1998; Frickel & Gross, 2005). Meyer and Jepperson’s (2000) notion of the “agency for cultural standards” implies a definite approach also to the analysis of radical institutional change: no less than for institutional persistence and stability, “standardized technologies for agentic authority” (Meyer &

Jepperson, 2000, p. 117) for radical institutional change and the constitution of its agents can be sought “littered around the landscape” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 345). One possible outcome of radical institutional change comprises “scientization” with new fields of higher education and research evolving—such as Public Administration once did, or as Women’s Studies, Black Studies, or the Environmental Sciences have done later on (Frank, Robinson, & Olesen, 2011). The fourth research question ensues:

Research Question 4: What radical institutional changes has Finland’s administrative research gone through?

The Micro-institutionalization of Finland’s Administrative Research

A Dual Start, the Eradication of Public Administration, and the Crisis of Administrative Science

From the viewpoint of the neo-institutionalist subspecies of research pursued in this article, a phenomenon arises while it is being named, subsumed under given categories, included in one or several classes of phenomena, framed by boundaries, and provided with an identity. In 1965, Finland’s government passed legislation on a new field of academic disciplines that was named *hallintotieteet*—literally, the Administrative Sciences. As a separate development, in the same year Parliament funded the establishment of a new Associate Professor’s position in *hallinto-oppi* at the Department of Political Science of the University of Helsinki. The word *hallinto-oppi* had evolved between the two world wars in literal translation of the German term *Verwaltungslehre*, and rendered in Finland’s official translations into English as Administrative Studies.

Until 1965 till the beginning of the 1980s, Finland’s Administrative Sciences were confined to the University of Tampere only, in 1965-1992 comprising four disciplines awarding Master’s and Doctoral degrees. Two were innovations from 1965, *julkishallinto*—literally, Public

Administration—and Social and Economic Ecology, a few years later renamed into Regional Studies. A third discipline, *kunnallispolitiikka*—in translation of the German term *Kommunalpolitik*, literally Municipal Policy, since the 1990s officially translated in Finland into English as Local Governance—had until 1965 offered Master's and Doctoral degrees within the Social Sciences. A fourth discipline, Public Law, was upgraded in 1965 from a vocational academic training status into an academic discipline for educating legal specialist administrators to compete with the lawyers and attorneys turned out in the country's Faculties of Law. (Figure 1, referring to the predecessor of item 1, and items 5, 10, and 11.)

FIGURE 1

Further developments took place also at the University of Helsinki. There, in 1970, the discipline of Political Science divided itself into three Orientations: International Relations, General Political Science, and Administrative Studies. Among these, the last one changed its name in 2005 into the Orientation of Administrative and Organizational Research (Figure 1, item 4). In the 1970s, the University of Turku also separated off in the discipline of Political Science an Orientation of Administrative Studies, but phased it out by the 1990s.

By the late 1980s, Public Administration (PA) had spread from the University of Tampere to three other of Finland's universities. In 1994, Finland's all three Finnish-speaking universities offering PA modified the name of the entire field of disciplines, *hallintotieteet*—the Administrative Sciences—to constitute a new core discipline under the name *hallintotiede*—Administrative Science. This name was substituted for *julkishallinto*—Public Administration—with the eradication of the latter from the Finnish language in the capacity of a discipline name. By contrast, ever since 1981, Finland's sole Swedish-speaking general university, Åbo Akademi, continues to offer *offentlig förvaltning*—literally, Public Administration. In 2010, University of Vaasa substituted the name *julkisjohtaminen*, Public Management, for *hallintotiede* on the explanation of taking a

“management training turn” (UVa, 2011). Since, only two universities retain *hallintotiede*, also as in 2008-2009, an effort to turn the Political Science Orientation of Administrative and Organizational Research at the University of Helsinki into the independent discipline of *hallintotiede* failed (Virtanen, 2010, p. 163).

Official Regulation towards Finland's Administrative Research

Finland's administrative research is subject to detailed and complex official regulation. One of its varieties demarcates disciplinary fields and a certain minority of the individual disciplines, and also assigns the universities their obligations to award Master's and Doctoral degrees within the fields and disciplines (Table 1, column I). The regulation separates Finland's administrative research from the research and higher education field of Organization and Management, which falls within another disciplinary category, *liiketaloustiede*. This term evolved early in the 20th century as a literal translation of the German term *Betriebswirtschaftswissenschaft*, rendered in Finland's official English translations as Business Economics. Finland's official regulation also takes administrative research apart from Political Science, except for an idiosyncratic clause that defines one orientation within the discipline of Political Science (Figure 1, item 4) and one discipline (item 3) to make simultaneously parts both of *valtiotieteet* (literally, State Sciences) and the Administrative Sciences (Table 2; not depicted in Figure 1).

TABLE 1

Seven of Finland's nine general universities but none of the six specialized universities are obliged to offer Master's and Doctoral degrees in academic disciplines of administrative research (Table 2). Those disciplines comprise all constituents of the Administrative Sciences, and parts of *valtiotieteet* (literally, State Sciences, but in the misleading official translation into English, Social

Sciences), the Health Sciences, and *yhteiskuntatieteet* (literally and in official translation, the Social Sciences) (Table 2; Figure 1). Finland's all administrative research disciplines taken together (Figure 1) have about one hundred permanent research-and-teaching posts (professors, university lecturers, lecturers, instructors, and senior assistants). One fourth of these are situated within what can be called an "inner core" (items 1-4), some ten per cent in an "outer core" (5-7 and 12), and two thirds outside the "core" (8-11, 13 and 14). The student-teacher ratios are high even after subtracting from the official figures—about 2,500 Master's degree and 350 Doctoral students (within all items of Figure 1 combined)—the share of the former characteristically stuck even for years in preparing their Master's thesis, and the majority of the Doctoral students who will never complete their degree.

TABLE 2

Finland's higher education policy makers launched efforts to substitute study programs for academic disciplines in late 1970s, but the latter made a triumphant return by the early 1990s. Consequently, all students in the 116 statutory extraordinary Master's programs that the universities are obliged to offer (MEC, 2011b) besides their discipline-based Master's degrees, and the unrecorded number of the Master's programs that the universities provide by their own choice, must gain admission to the organizing discipline or one of the participating disciplines. Among the 116 statutory Master's programs, two are offered within the administrative research disciplines, namely the Master's Program in Police Administration and the Master's Program in Higher Education Administration, both run by the discipline of Administrative Science at the University of Tampere.

The micro-institutionalization of Finland's official science policies deviates from its higher education policy counterpart in important respects. In the official language of the Academy of Finland (AF; Table 1, column II), the major term referring to administrative research is *hallintotiede*, literally Administrative Science, although translated by the Academy into its official

English as Public Administration. As another complication, the Academy includes *hallintotiede* as a subfield within *valtiotieteet*. The latter term literally signifies State Sciences in venerable translation of the German term *Staatswissenschaften*, but rendered in official Academy in English as—Political Science. The Academy also distinguishes the two other Political Science of International Relations and Politology.

The regulatory language of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and the Academy of Finland (AF) makes no mention of a large share of the administrative research disciplines or their research fields. The MEC legal norms leave it a matter of the universities' own discretion either to retain or eradicate altogether seven among the administrative research disciplines offering Master's and Doctoral degrees (Figure 1, items 1, 2, 5-8, 12, and 10 with the exception of UEF/Jo). On the contrary, the MEC norms explicitly constitute two of the "inner core" elements of Finland's administrative research (3 and 4) and four other elements (item 10 in UEF/Jo, 9, 11 and 13). AF, in turn, elevates some parts outside the above "inner core" into a special standing in that it offers them an alternative funding category besides that of Public Administration: Law (for 8 and 10), Environmental Social Science Research (9), or Public Health Research (13).

A third regulatory order (Table 1, column III) aims at influencing the admission numbers to vocational, polytechnic and university education, although does not in actually practice prescribe those numbers. Since 2013, a fourth order (Table 1, column IV) applies rough publication impact indicators among the criteria of Ministry of Education and Culture funding to the universities.

The four regulatory orders analyzed display characteristics to be expected in the neo-institutional perspective: nomenclature, categories, classes, boundaries and identities entail "breaches" insofar as inspected more closely (Powell & Colyvas, 2008; Schneiberg & Clemens, 2006, p. 214). As the last row of Table 1 reminds, the "breaches" have not gone unnoticed by the authorities.

Finland's Administrative Research: For Itself, for Others, and for Cultural Standards

Recently Weakening Institutionalization

Since its advent in 1965, Finland's administrative research has borne what neo-institutionalism calls "agency for oneself", with independent disciplines or orientations of disciplines (Figure 1) offering Master's and the Doctoral degrees. For some time, one university, Vaasa, had a Faculty of the Administrative Sciences, and the total number of university result units, mostly departments, made up of administrative research disciplines reached the maximum number of seven. In a few years, by 2012, the number of the university result units dedicated to administrative research and the related higher education has decreased to three in mergers into ever larger units.

Finland's administrative research appeared to be more challenged than is actually the case, since the country turned in the early 2010s to continuing its implementation of the Bologna process of European higher education standardization (Schriewer, 2009). Although Finland had introduced the Bachelor's degrees in the 1980s, they had remained a formality without job market value, especially as the students were directly admitted to pursue the Master's degree. During the 2010s, Finland is introducing "Bolognese" multi-disciplinary Bachelor's degrees. As a consequence, the five-year Master's degrees of 300 European Credit Transfer System credit points—with 180 credits earned while taking the Bachelor's degree and additional 120 credits earned while pursuing the Master's studies proper—will no more comprise 140-160 credits as they used to do. However, despite that the multi-disciplinary Bachelor's degrees nominally push the number of credits earned in the major discipline down to 80-90, by skillful redefinitions the universities are keeping the essentials intact, such as redefining previous disciplinary studies in research-oriented topics into multi-disciplinary research-oriented studies. Some thinning of substance is taking place within the more specialized disciplines, driven towards mergers of their respective Bachelor's and Master's degree studies; so far, item 5 of Figure 1 is partially merging with item 11, and items 6 and 7 are partially merging together. The institutional absorption of the academic degrees reform conforms to neo-

institutionalist expectancies of homogenization of formal institutional elements with limited or enforcement of actual similarity of substance—or none at all (Beckert, 2010).

Serving Others, Enacting Cultural Standards

Although Finland has no career civil service (Demmke & Moilanen, 2010), its administrative research has definitely borne what neo-institutionalism calls “agency for others” while contributing to higher education. In 2010, three out of ten among the 342 Managers—*kunnanjohtajat*, nominated except for one elected exception—of Finland’s similar number of local governments held a Master’s or a higher degree in the Administrative Sciences (items 1, 2 and 5-12 in Figure 1). On the contrary, the thousands of men and women who had earned their degree in the Administrative Sciences since 1965 numbered only four among the 103 highest civil servant leaders and managers at Finland’s government ministries. Among the leaders and managers, graduates from the other social science fields numbered thirty-two (with degrees from *valtiotieteet* or *yhteiskuntatieteet*, cf. Table 2), graduates from Faculties of Law, twenty-eight, and graduates from altogether seven other academic fields, thirty-nine (FGA, 2010).

Official regulation vests Finland’s administrative research (Table 1, columns I and II) with “cultural standards” sanctioned by the state, while the legislator prescribes an agency of the disciplinary field of the Administrative Sciences for numerous disciplines (Figure 1, not only items 1, 2 and 5-12, but also 3 and 4). Furthermore, the Academy of Finland (AF) spreads wide (all of Figure 1) the science policy “agency” for *hallintotiede*—literally, Administrative Science, but in AF English, Public Administration. Academic curricula institutionalize “agency” of further specialized “scientized” types (Frank, Schofer, & Torres, 1994; cf. Seeck & Laakso, 2010). The curricula of Finland’s administrative research disciplines of early 2012 accentuated ample inception into research, typically comprising 75-80 credit points, or one half of those required in the major

discipline since the beginning of the Bachelor's degree studies until the full completion of the Master's degree.

Within what has been called above the “inner core” of Finland's administrative research disciplines, Administrative Science at Tampere (item 1 in Figure 1) required in early 2012 compulsory courses in general management, personnel management and service management but required little of budgeting and finance, and also ran the two specialized Master's programs in Police Administration and Higher Education Administration. The topics of compulsory courses in Public Administration at Åbo Akademi (item 3 in Figure 1) comprised administrative systems, budgeting and finance, and personnel administration; beyond these, Public Administration offered quite a rich palette of alternative courses. Public Management at Vaasa (item 2 in Figure 1) required compulsory courses on public management ethics, budgeting and finance, and the management of market-type mechanisms, and also ran a separate European Civil Servants Master's Program. The compulsory courses of Administrative and Organizational Research at the University of Helsinki (item 4 in Figure 1) covered several general Political Science topics, organizational and neo-institutional analysis, and public policy analysis, but balanced by a separate minor studies program of 60 credit points in generic Management.

From a neo-institutionalist point of view, changes of academic discipline names may revise the “cultural standards” borne in academia towards “scientization”, or, on the contrary, away from it. The 1994 protagonists legitimated the 1994 substitution of the discipline name *hallintotiede*—Administrative Science—for *julkishallinto*—Public Administration—with explicit “scientization”. Furthermore, the deletion of the attribute “public” from the discipline name (cf. Pesch, 2008) indicated efforts to expand the disciplinary scope to cover also business administration and private non-profit administration. Nominal “scientization” also advanced with the replacement of the disciplinary names of Social and Health Administration and Health Administration with the names that literally translate into Social and Health Administrative Science and Health Administrative Science (Figure 1, disciplines 12 and 13). On the contrary, the 2010 University of Vaasa

substitution of Public Management for the 1994-2010 discipline name of Administrative Science is the only representative case so far with explicit nominal rejection of “scientization” within Finland’s administrative research.

Professors and other scholars bear agency for the “cultural standards” of research, scholarly publication, and the exposure of the research results for global or national collegial criticism. The publications of Finland’s professors in what can be termed the “broader core” of administrative research—items 1-7 and 12 in Figure 1, distinguished on the liberal criterion of finding no direct equivalents in other national research fields—indicate the presence of numerous themes of global administrative research (Table 3). The exceptions include administrative history and administrative law, and also public policy except for research on policy evaluation. Personnel administration is weakly represented, and the themes of management research accentuate management functions rather than the more behavioral aspects of managerial work and leadership (Table 3).

TABLE 3

The publication activities of Finland’s professors of administrative research show little systematic pattern. Tenure and career length hardly coincide with the publication output, the publication themes do not neatly correspond with those of the disciplines, and thematic specialists coexist with generalists (Table 3; Table 4).

TABLE 4

Processes and Outcomes of Institutionalization in Finland’s Administrative Research

Diffusion from Without, Contagion from Within

Finland's official disciplinary field of the Administrative Sciences and its core discipline of Public Administration were no inventions "made in Finland" in 1965. The former had been represented since 1932 by the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), which had had members from Finland since the outset. The new disciplinary field also continued what *valtiotieteet* (literally, the State Sciences) and *yhteiskuntatieteet* (literally, the Social Sciences) had done before, now extending "scientization" to cover also "administration."

In the absence of available models and scripts in Europe those days, for *julkishallinto*, Public Administration, these diffused to Finland from the United States. This took place despite "enormous differences in resources and traditions" (Meyer, Boli, Thomas, & Ramirez, 1997, p. 145), and with local decoupling between "high forms" and the modest implementation (Meyer, 2000, p. 244). Indeed, the discipline of Public Administration started in Finland in 1965 with only a single Professor holding a fresh Doctorate in Public Law and a Master's degree in Political Science.

Finland's administrative research and related higher education expanded at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s from the University of Tampere to two other universities by what research has called "contagion" (Strang & Soule, 1998; Røvik, 2011). This was further catalyzed by the efforts of Finland's integrated Swedish-speaking community, and the government creation of new universities in the country's regions. The established Swedish-speaking Åbo Akademi University and the evolving University of Vaasa founded the discipline of Public Administration, and the latter also institutionalized the Administrative Sciences while adding Public Law and Sociology, although eventually replacing the latter with Regional Studies (see Figure 1). Later in the 1980s, the evolving University of Lapland founded Administrative Sciences with the disciplines of Public Administration and Public Law. Movements of academics catalyzed the expansion (cf. Gioia, Price, & Thomas, 2010); the first Vaasa Professor and Associate Professor of Public Administration and the first and third Lapland Professor of Public Administration (since 1994, Administrative Science) were recruited from among the Tampere Doctors of Administrative Science in Public

Administration, and the second Lapland professor also came from the Tampere Administrative Sciences.

At the end of the 1970s, Finland adapted further models and scripts of “scientization” diffusing from the United States, while elevating Nursing into an academic field under the name *hoitotiede*—literally, Nursing Science. Around it, the new disciplinary field of the Health Sciences evolved, one of its disciplines comprising *terveyshallinto*—literally, Health Administration. In the 2000s, it changed its name to *terveyshallintotiede*, literally Health Administrative Science, although rendered in Finland’s official English translation as Health Management Science. The discipline also spawned *sosiaalihallintotiede*—literally, Social Administrative Science, in official translation, Social Management Science. (For these developments, see Laiho, 2010; cf. Figure 1).

Following generic institutionalization paths of evolving scientific fields (Schofer, 2003; Drori & Meyer, 2006), Finland’s scholars of administrative research developed ties with international associations. Since its 1932 inception, the IIAS had drawn practitioners from Finland and, later, it started attracting also the country’s scholars. Both Finland’s academics and practitioners have keenly participated in the European Group of Public Administration (EGPA) since its establishment in 1975, including the organization of the 1977 and 2001 EGPA Annual Conferences in Finland (Bouckaert & v.d. Donk, 2010).

In 1981, Finland’s administrative research institutionalized its general scientific movement (Frickel & Gross, 2005), while establishing the Association for Administrative Research, representing some disciplines more than others in its board (Figure 1, items 1-4, 6, 7, and 12-14). The Finnish Association for Local Government Studies, founded in 1971, has included in its board both scholars (Figure 1, from 5, 8 and 9, and frequently also 1, 2, 7, and 12-14) and, according to the association’s very statutes, representatives of local government practice. Both associations publish a refereed scholarly journal and organize an annual conference of their own. Finland’s particular institutional differentiation of academic disciplines and research fields is likely to explain why the country’s scholars in administrative research rarely participate in national, Nordic,

European or global associations and scientific events of Political Science and Organization and Management.

After Finland started adapting global—importantly, German and Dutch—models and scripts for doctoral graduate schools with government funding, administrative research was able to establish a school of its own, first with the widest possible scope in 1995-2002 (all items in Figure 1) and, for the last years of 2003-2006, with a more constrained focus (items 1-7 and 12). Another doctoral graduate school, which is still in operation, evolved in 2002 within the discipline of Administrative Science at the University of Tampere on the theme of Higher Education Administration.

Institutional Loose Coupling with Trade-offs between Performance and Legitimation

Characteristics of institutional “loose coupling” offer Finland’s universities full discretion in deciding the admission criteria they implement while selecting their students, and, in the absence of academic accreditation in the country, in defining the curricular contents of the studies they offer towards academic degrees. Finland lacking a career system of public administration contributes to further “loose coupling”, which obtains between academic degrees and the actual career paths of the graduates from the administrative research disciplines, only with the possible exception of the disciplines with the most technical specialization (especially 6 and 7 in Figure 1). The admission quotas imposed by the universities restrict the ensuing graduate numbers, and, eventually, contribute to the sustainable solid employment of most of the graduates, including those from the administrative research disciplines.

Ever since Meyer and Rowan’s study (1977), neo-institutionalists analyze compromises in performance that legitimation possibly requires. The weakly Web of Science presence of Finland’s professors in administrative research (cf. Table 3, column III) leaves the option of utilizing Google Scholar data for individual-level analysis. Table 5 offers a bibliometric snapshot of fifteen professors within the “core disciplines” of Finland’s administrative research, utilizing the

bibliometric h index (Hirsch, 2005; Costas & Bordons, 2007; for a technical explanation of the index, Table 4; for the “core” disciplines, Table 3). Table 5 contrasts the fifteen professors with eleven of Finland’s professors of general Political Science, eleven of the country’s professors in Organization and Management (O&M; cf. Table 2), and nine professors of Administration and Organization Theory at the University of Bergen, Norway. No other universities in Norway, nor any in Sweden and Denmark, were included because of their integration of administrative research either with Political Science or O&M—unlike the characteristic solutions applied in Finland.

TABLE 5

Finland’s professors of administrative research receive an average h index value of less than one half of the Political Science professors, and only somewhat above one half of the O&M professors and the University of Bergen professors (Table 5). The differences between the averages and the medians indicate that Finland’s administrative research and Political Science professors constitute groups that are pronouncedly homogenous—in neo-institutionalist language, solidly “institutionalized” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 155). The homogeneity stands out, in particular, if contrasted with the Bergen scholars, among whom a single professor stands out as the bibliometric leader.

Table 6 offers another snapshot, utilizing Web of Science (WoS) data on Finland and three other Nordic countries. Besides a selection of Public Administration and Public Management (PA & PM) journals, the table also takes up a selection of journals from three other research fields. WoS makes no distinction between those scholars who work in institutional positions within each of the four fields and others, but includes them all. Table 6 indicates the number of scientific articles per one million of population in a country, the average number of citations to an article, and, only for PA & PM, h index values calculated from WoS data (cf. Bernauer & Gilardi, 2011). According to Table 6, the contribution of Finland’s scholars is modest within PA & PM and negligible within Public

Policy. The contrast offered by the comparatively keen global contribution of Finland's scholars within Organization Research and Political Science witness against a more general global marginalization of Finland's scholars. For a neo-institutionalist interpretation, the results indicate an incompletely achieved institutionalization of Finland's scholars of PA & PM to contribute to global research in their field. The results also suggest that Public Policy in Finland comprises a gap area between PA & PM and Political Science with weak institutionalization of research.

TABLE 6

The modest contribution to global research by Finland's administrative research requires attention to other possible sources for its legitimation. Neo-institutionalism accepts the evaluation of performance only with the legitimation criteria that are valid in each case. Accordingly, it may withhold praise from impressive quantitative performance on the one hand, and on the other suspend the repudiation of chronic quantitative performance failure insofar as it turns out to be legitimate (Meyer & Zucker, 1989).

Might not the achievements of Finland's administrative research in the service of practical administration compensate for its modest global contributions, or more? They hardly do. First, Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture implements higher education policy goals, the Academy of Finland executes science policy goals, and each university defines its own goals, but none of the three goal sets accentuates the contributions of academic administrative research to practical administration. Second, the compulsory workload of none of Finland's professors and other scholars of administrative research would prevent them from dedicating the best of their efforts to global scholarly publication, and therefore the modesty of their overall global scholarly contribution suggests another constitution of their priorities. Third, Finland's professors in the "broader core" of administrative research (Figure 1, items 1-7 and 12) lack experience of administrative practice short of university administration, having all entered a full-time academic

career at the completion of their Master's degree or only a brief career elsewhere, except for one of them with a mid-career transition from a public sector middle management position. Fourth, Finland's professors and other full-time scholars in administrative research are typically neither experts in the tools and techniques of practical administration, nor experts in problem-solving studies for the benefit of practical administration. A national publication database indicates that many of the practical contributions of the country's administrative research professors consist of modest background studies and small-scale evaluations only (Table 3, column VII).

Given the above, what is the secret behind the legitimation that Finland's administrative research and the related higher education have enjoyed, at least so far? The neo-institutionalist interpretation evolves as pronouncedly mundane and low-profile. It pinpoints the institutionally taken-for-granted standing of the administrative research disciplines in turning out graduates who characteristically find employment easily because of the institutionally taken-for-granted restrictions in the numbers of students admitted to pursue the respective academic degrees.

Radical Institutional Change in Finland's Administrative Research

When looking for radical institutional change in Finland's administrative research, the years 1992-1994 stand out. The macro frame comprises Finland's first all-bourgeois government coalition since 1966, holding office in 1991-1995. Towards the end of 1991, the Soviet political orbit dissolved, setting free also Finland, which had since 1944 been its only market economy and Western democracy, and releasing Finland to apply for European Union membership as soon as in March 1992. The 1991-1994 freefall of Finland's GDP with thirteen percent and the shooting of unemployment from 3.5 to 19 percent catalyzed the country's institutionalization of global models and scripts of monetarism and public sector retrenchment, both enacted ever since (Lee & Strang, 2006; Schmitt, 2011).

The fact that the legal regulation of academic degrees used to be stricter than it is today presupposed statutory changes to enable University of Tampere to create in 1992 a new discipline to turn out Master's and Doctoral degrees, named Financial Administration and Public Sector Accounting (Figure 1, item 6). It evolved as a hybrid of the Orientation of Financial Administration introduced in the discipline of Public Administration a few years earlier, and vocational academic education offered in Public Sector Accounting. Two years later, the Ministry of Education commissioned an evaluation of administrative research and related higher education (Martikainen & Uusikylä, 1994), which foresaw the Ministry of Finance's permanent secondment of two of its civil servants to the evaluators' Department of Political Science at the University of Helsinki as higher-ranking para-academics. In the same year, in the formal initiative of the Universities of Tampere, Vaasa and Lapland, the Ministry of Education enforced the statutory substitution of the discipline name Administrative Science for Public Administration. Further in the same year, legislative measures entitled two University of Tampere disciplines of vocational academic education to upgrade into offering the Master's and Doctoral degrees (Figure 1, items 7 and 8), and another Tampere discipline, having offered only minor subject studies until that time, to carry out the analogous upgrading (item 9).

A neo-institutionalist account of the 1992 new discipline establishment at the University of Tampere pinpoints the general and financial public management measures launched by Finland's 1987-1991 Conservative-Social Democrat government coalition, and their interpretation at the University as signals of the ripe time for "scientization" with a new discipline offering Master's and Doctoral degrees and research outputs. The 1994 transfer of civil servants to the University of Helsinki promised to improve the legitimation of the receiving side in relation to the guardian ministry of the government "pursestrings". The disciplinary renaming in the same year at three universities stands out as enactment of a legitimating "rationalized myth" of "scientization" of administration—creating the very discipline of Administrative Science. Finally, the 1994 upgrading of three University of Tampere disciplines implemented a legitimizing "rationalized myth" of

delivering “more with less”, despite the adverse cutback circumstances that hit the upgraded disciplines no less than the other functions of the universities.

Summary and Conclusions

The neo-institutionalist approach of this article has contributed all its themes and connected it with a body of previous research. The results pinpoint contradictions within the official regulation that influences Finland’s administrative research, albeit moderated by flexible implementation. The results also indicate recent weakening in the organizational and disciplinary independence of the research field. Pronounced trade-offs obtain between the limited global scholarly contribution of Finland’s administrative research and the domestic legitimation it has enjoyed—so far. Radical institutional change within the field has, first and foremost, built upon the enactment of models and scripts of academic disciplinary upgrading as a variant of institutionalization pursued by the means of “scientization”.

Finland’s government has been taking steps in the 2010s towards tighter coupling between scholarly publication impact and government funding to universities (Table 1, column IV). This modifies the legitimation conditions also within the country’s administrative research towards more emphasis upon scholarly publication, with special reference to stronger global contributions. The changes also accentuate the benefits available for the research field—in Finland’s case rather “boundaries without identity” than “identity without boundaries” (Raadschelders, 2010; cf. Figure 1)—from the explicit rehabilitation of the academic field of Public Administration. This would help restore the global scholarly comparability, which was curtailed at the 1994 replacement of the core discipline *julkishallinto*—Public Administration—with *hallintotiede*—Administrative Science, which, in the end, did not quite make the grade.

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Bio

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Table 1. Four Official Regulatory Orders of Science and Higher Education Policies in Finland

	Regulation of:			
	I Disciplines and degrees	II Research fields	III Fields of education	IV Fields of publication
A Basis	GA (2004) and ME (2005) legislation	AF (2010) decision	GA (2010) legislation	MEC (cf. 2011a) decision
B Source	Science and education	policy elites, for field	III, also the unions	and the employers
C Implementation	Legal obligations of the universities to award Master's and Doctoral degrees in given disciplinary fields and disciplines	Allocation of funds for projects and individual applications, by research fields and subfields	Government, union and business efforts to influence the admission numbers to education	Since 2013, the share of MEC university funding pinned upon publication numbers risen from 5 to 13 per cent
D Languages	Finnish, Swedish;	for the second and fourth order, also English		
E Categorization	The universities' obligations to offer degrees within 40 disciplinary fields and 110 individual disciplines	Groups of research fields (7), research fields (56), within some of the latter, subfields (45)	Fields (29) and subfields (about 100) of vocational, polytechnic and university education	Covers 20,000 journals and 1,200 publishers in 23 research fields, many with subfields
F Classification	The universities obliged to offer the degrees; the explicitly mentioned among the disciplines (110 of 500)	Topics present as main categories vs. subcategories; unitary vs. subdivided topics; topics not included	Fields of education to increase vs. retain vs. reduce their admission numbers	Each arena of publication in the classes earning the most, fewer or no funding points
G Boundaries	Between disciplinary fields and disciplines; between the entitled universities and others	Between research fields and between subfields	Between fields of vocational, polytechnic and university education	Between each publication arena class and also between their publications
H Identities	Disciplinary groups, disciplines, and the universities maintaining the groups and disciplines	Scientific fields and subfields	Fields of vocational, polytechnic and university education	23 research fields, and the two publication arena types entitling to funding points
I Breaches (Schneiberg & Clemens, 2006, p. 214)	Dual and excessive regulation together with regulatory gaps; MEC has been considering the rejection of the regulatory order	Dual channels of funding for some fields or subfields, absence of explicit channels for some others	Non-implementation or moderation of the announced reductions in the admission numbers	Lobbying possibly influencing the inclusion of a domestic publication arena; no accounting of the bibliometric impact of each arena

Explanations: The sources comprise of official documents indicated and public domain information. MEC stands for Ministry of Education and Culture and AF, for Academy of Finland.

Table 2. Institutionalization of Administrative Research within Finland's Higher Education

University	Students (2010)	Master's and Doctoral degrees in:		
		Disciplinary fields with administrative research	For contrast:	
			O&M (1)	Political Science
Helsinki	36,600	<i>Valtiotieteet</i> (2) and Administrative Sciences (3)	None	Yes
Aalto (4)	20,000	None	Yes	None
Turku	18,700	None	Yes	Yes
Oulu	15,400	Health Sciences	Yes	None
Tampere	15,400	Administrative Sciences	Yes	Yes
Eastern Finland	14,400	Administrative, Health, and Social Sciences (5)	Yes	None
Jyväskylä	13,600	None	Yes	Yes
Tampere Technological	10,200	None	None	None
Åbo Akademi	6,400	Same legislative situation as in Helsinki	Yes	Yes
Lappeenranta Technological	5,300	None	Yes	None
Lapland (Rovaniemi)	4,800	Administrative Sciences	None	Yes
Vaasa	4,800	Administrative Sciences	Yes	None
Swedish School of Economics	2,300	None	Yes	None
University of the Arts (6)	2,100	None	None	None
National Defence University	680	N.A.	None	None

Explanations: (1) Organization & Management, part of the disciplinary field of Business Economics. (2) Literally, State Sciences, but in Finland's official English translation, Social Sciences; cf. point (5) below. (3) Legislation prescribes the same offerings (Figure 1, item 4) to make part of both *valtiotieteet* and the Administrative Sciences. (4) A specialized university in technology, business, and industrial arts. (5) The Finnish term *yhteiskuntatieteet* is officially translated into English literally as Social Sciences; cf. point (2) above. (6) Since 2013, the university continues the operations of three earlier small specialized universities.

Table 3. Thematic Aspects of the Publication Activity of Finland's Professors of Administrative Research

Most cited publication				Most recent publications recorded		
I Pro- fessor	II Dis- cip- line	III Web of Science	IV Google Scholar	V Google Scholar, only academic publications	Since the year 2000	
					VI From <i>Arto</i> database	VII From <i>Fennica</i> database
A.	1	None	Higher education (HE) administration and HE management			
B.	7	Performance measurement in government in general, and in local government, in particular			Health services	
C.	2	Welfare state governance	Agentification	Trust, governance, ethics, and anti-corruption		Regional administration
D.	3	Environmental policy, governance, and administration				None
E.	4	Political culture	Policy evaluation	Administra- tive culture	History of concepts	Evaluation of Arts Councils
F.	5	Local governance, regional governance, metropolitan governance				
G.	6	Government cutbacks	Organization networks		Pension systems	Attitudes of planners
H.	1	Organizational innovation		Information management	Local govern- ment councils	Regulation of SMEs
I.	6	Inter-govern- mental grants	Performance auditing	Local government accounting and auditing		
J.	1	None	Trust in government	Human capital	Local govern- ment councils	City contract governance
K.	12	Trust among the elderly	Policy evaluation (for all three columns)			University teaching
L.	1	None	Organizational performance		Local social media	Local govern- ment mergers
M.	1	None	Development administration		None in these categories	
N.	2	Welfare state governance		Policy evaluation	Comparison methods	A university evaluation
O.	1	None	Ethics vs. performance in public organization leadership		Management for results	None

Explanations: The data are as of 14 March 2012, for professors in eight disciplines or comparable domains (Figure 1, items 1-7 and 12, as indicated in column II). Finland's national publication databases (cf. columns VI and VII) cover scholarly and popular articles (*Arto*), from among which only the former have been taken into account in the table, and books and other longer publications (*Fennica*), from among which only the non-scholarly contributions have been included.

Table 4. Quantitative Aspects of the Publication Activity of Finland's Professors of Administrative Research

I Pro- fessor	II Position	III Discip- line	IV Domestic publications	Google Scholar, 14 March 2012		
				V Years of publishing	VI Publica- tions	VII Index h
A.	L	1	32	25	32	8
B.	N	7	50	17	53	8
C.	T	2	72	29	32	7
D.	T	3	28	18	40	7
E.	T	4	111	30	49	7
F.	T	5	70	19	19	6
G.	N	6	43	19	16	6
H.	T	1	167	31	24	5
I.	L	6	146	26	26	5
J.	T	1	96	19	21	4
K.	T	12	41	19	19	4
L.	N	1	19	8	11	3
M.	T	1	45	33	6	2
N.	T	2	29	5	7	2
O.	L	1	54	19	5	1

Explanations: The data are as of 14 March 2012, for professors in eight disciplines or comparable domains (indicated in column III, items 1-7 and 12 in Figure 1). In column II, T signifies tenure, L a time-limited five-year nomination, and N, a non-tenured position. Column IV indicates the combined number of *all* publications included in Finland's national publication databases *Fennica* and *Arto* (cf. Table 3). The h index (column VII) assigns a unit of observation (a scholar, a journal, a research group, an academic department, the scholars from a country, etc.) the index value h if h of the unit's N_p publications have received h citations each (Hirsch, 2005). The limited overlaps between Google Scholar, *Fennica* and *Arto* data could be estimated not to distort the conclusions.

Table 5. Four Groups of Professors Contrasted on the Bibliometric h Index

Professors	GS		WoS
	Average h	Median h	Group h
1. Core administrative research disciplines, Finland, n=15	5.0	5	3
2. Political Science, Finland, n=11	10.7	11	15
3. Organization and Management, Finland, n=11	9.5	7	12
4. Administration and Organization Research, Bergen, Norway, n=9	9.1	5	10

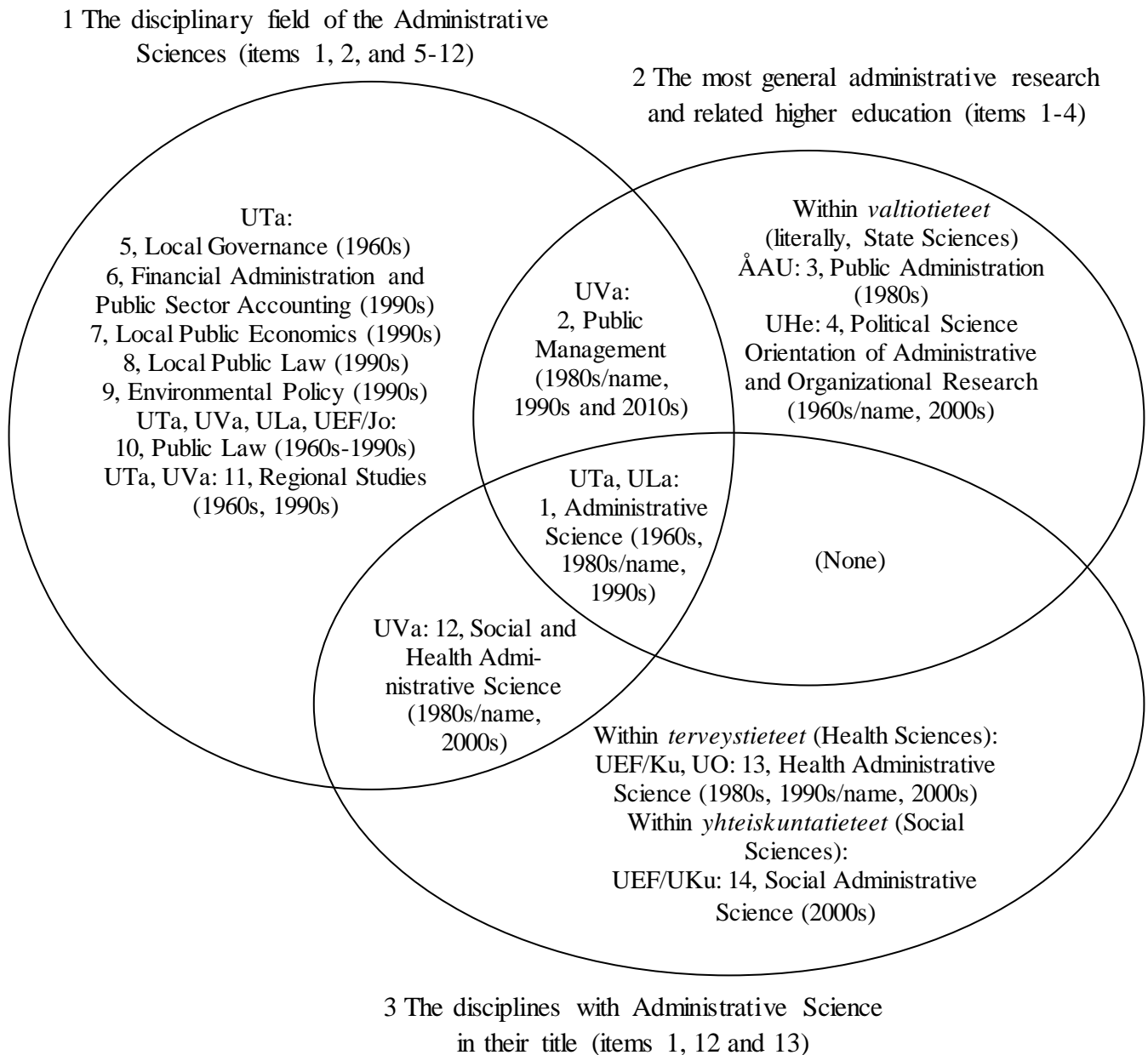
Explanations: The calculation of the h index is explained in Table 4. The GS (Google Scholar) data derive from the Harzing (2012) database. All GS and WoS (Web of Science) data are as of 14 March 2012. The table covers the same professors as Tables 3 and 4 (representing items 1-7 and 12 of Figure 1). For homogenization, the table excludes Finland's professors of World Politics and International Relations, and also the O&M professors at universities without administrative research disciplines.

Table 6. Scholars from Four Nordic Countries in Journals of Four Research Fields

	Sweden	Norway	Denmark	Finland
Population, million	9.4	5.0	5.5	5.4
Official languages	Swedish	Norwegian	Danish	Finnish, Swedish
Public Administration and Public Management				
Articles/1 million of population	3.8	10.6	21.5	2.6
Citations/article	4.4	4.8	3.5	1.2
Index h	7	8	11	1
Organization Research				
Articles/1 million of population	85.6	10.4	15.1	11.9
Citations/article	36.8	40.2	13.5	12.4
Public Policy				
Articles/1 million of population	8.0	9.0	13.4	0.8
Citations per article	9.2	11.5	11.1	7.1
Political Science				
Articles/1 million of population	3.1	10.8	6.9	2.8
Citations/article	8.6	9.1	5.8	34.8

Explanations: The data are from Web of Science as of 21 March 2012. The calculation of the h index is explained in Table 4. Five journals from four research fields were selected in the order of their impact value after inclusions and exclusions on the following principles: (1) the journal name must explicitly indicate its scholarly orientation, (2) there must be no reference in the journal name to a world region except for Europe, nor to an individual country, and (3) more than only a few articles from the four countries must have appeared in the journal. The selection is: (1)

Administration & Society, International Public Management Journal, Public Administration, Public Administration Review, and Public Management Review, (2) Organizational Research Methods, Organization Science, Administrative Science Quarterly, Organization Studies, and Organization, (3) Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Governance, Journal of European Public Policy, Review of Policy Research, and Policy Studies Journal, and (4) Political Analysis, Comparative Political Studies, Perspectives on Politics, West European Politics, and Journal of Politics.

Figure 1. Disciplinary Institutionalization of Administrative Research in Finland

Explanations: The references to decades indicate the institutionalization of the Master's and the Doctoral degrees, and also name changes of disciplines. UHe, University of Helsinki, ÅAU, Åbo Akademi University, UTa, University of Tampere, UVa, University of Vaasa, ULa, University of Lapland, UEF, University of Eastern Finland Joensuu unit (UEF/Jo) and Kuopio unit (UEF/Ku), UO, University of Oulu.